

Infant Passenger Safety: Guidance for Parents

The Consumers Union has reported on frontal and side-impact crash tests it conducted on rear-facing infant-only car safety seats in the February issue of *Consumer Reports*. The results of these crash tests are alarming to parents and pediatricians.

The Consumers Union tested infant-only seats in crash tests that were more severe than the tests that are required for car safety seats. The Consumers Union tests included frontal crashes at a speed higher than required for car safety seats and side-impact crashes, which are not required for car safety seats. The standards used in these tests are the same as those that are used in crash-testing most new vehicles.

The report indicates that most infant seats did not perform adequately in these more severe crash tests. In light of this report, and in consideration of the concerns parents and pediatricians may have about protecting infant passengers, the American Academy of Pediatrics offers the following guidance:

- **Parents should continue to use car safety seats on every trip for every child.**
- Parents should read and follow the car safety seat and vehicle manufacturers' instructions for their car safety seat.
- Car safety seats have been shown to be highly effective in reducing death and injury due to motor vehicle crashes. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), car safety seats are 71% effective in reducing deaths for infants and 54% effective in reducing deaths for children ages 1 to 4 years. Belt-positioning booster seats reduce the risk of injury by 59% for children ages 4 through 7 years. Clearly, restraining infants and children in the proper car safety seat does help keep them safe.
- The best seat is one that fits your child, fits your vehicle, and that you will use correctly on every trip.
- The Academy believes that current standards for testing of car safety seats are useful and rigorous but that the standards can and should be improved continually. In addition, car safety seat manufacturers should strive to enhance the safety of their products on an ongoing basis.
- Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians are trained in installing car safety seats properly and can help parents make sure their children are as safe as possible on the road. To find an inspection station, visit <http://www.seatcheck.org/> or call toll-free at 866/SEATCHECK (866/732-8243).

For more information about car safety seats, visit the "Car Safety Seats and Transportation Safety" Health Topics page at <http://www.aap.org/healthtopics/carseatsafety.cfm>